

July 5, 2007

Mr. Chuck Oliver
District Ranger
Bitterroot National Forest
P.O. Box 388
Darby, MT 59839

RECEIVED

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Ravalli County Commissioners

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Dear Mr. Oliver:

As a Montana resident and a frequent recreational user of the Bitterroot National Forest, I write to comment on the proposal from the Ravalli County Road and Bridge Department to reopen the quarry in Lost Horse Canyon. For the reasons detailed below, I strongly believe that this proposal works against the sensible and sustainable management of our national forest resources.

During the last five years, I have visited Lost Horse Canyon roughly a dozen times each year, in every season with the exception of deepest winter. Based on my observations during these visits, I would describe Lost Horse as a multi-use recreation site, which draws a diverse visitor group ranging from families enjoying a spring campout beside the creek to rock climbers seeking challenging multi-pitch routes of high quality in a beautiful setting. Whether people come for these reasons or others (such as kayaking, horseback riding, or just a scenic drive) an active quarrying operation will, in almost every case I can imagine, significantly detract from the visitor's experience. While the greatest observable impacts would include noise pollution, increased traffic on the narrow dirt road, and decreased access for hikers and climbers visiting the Lost Horse Crag, there is also the potential for negative impacts on wildlife habitat (e.g. raptors nesting on the cliffs above the quarry site) and for increased sedimentation of Lost Horse Creek.

While some of the impacts mentioned above may be less severe than others, the reopening of the quarry will certainly have a devastating impact on the climbing located on the Lost Horse Crag just northwest of the proposed quarry site. Having visited many of our country's finest climbing destinations, I can vouch for the quality of the climbing experience at Lost Horse—not only are the routes exceptional and unique but the setting is gorgeous. In addition to closing the current access route to the crags, the proposed quarrying would likely destabilize both the hillside where the access trail is located and the cliffs themselves, making climbing in the area a more difficult and dangerous undertaking. In short, this quarry, which has been proposed for a mere ten years of use, would destroy one of Montana's very best climbing destinations forever.

Were Lost Horse Canyon an area without such high and varied recreation values and potentially sensitive wildlife habitat, I would endorse a use such as a quarry, as there is clearly a need for resources to keep our roads in good condition. Yet given the numerous constituencies that enjoy Lost Horse for its quiet beauty and unique offerings, I believe

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U.S. AIR FORCE COMMISSIONERS

YES ... SNA

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there must be other more-suitable locations from which the Ravalli County Road and Bridge Department can extract the gravel they need for the coming decade.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of these comments and for your service as a steward of our public lands.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Adam K. French', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Adam K. French

P.O. Box 9122
Missoula, MT 59807
(406) 381-1664